

WASHINGTON - In recognition of Memorial Day and the travel challenges that U.S. troops face at busy airports, Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) has written an amendment that will expedite commercial airport security clearance for members of the military traveling on official orders.

The House Rules Committee today accepted the amendment for consideration when the Transportation Security Administration Authorization Act is brought to the floor in June.

Bachus and Representative Dennis Moore (KS-3) are the lead cosponsors of the amendment, which has drawn bipartisan support.

Congressman Bachus says, "Our men and women in uniform do so much for us. The least we can do for them as they rush through airports loaded down with heavy gear is to establish a faster but fully protective way for them to pass through security. There is no group that deserves this consideration more than the dedicated men and women who serve in the U.S. military."

The legislation directs the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to establish an expedited screening process for members of the Armed Services. Soldiers would have to be traveling on official orders and be in uniform. TSA would create a more efficient screening procedure for heavy military gear. Family members accompanying service personnel would be eligible for processing through the same expedited system.

Some airports and airlines have programs to expedite the handling of specific groups of passengers. However, no similar program exists for members of the Armed Forces traveling on official orders. The expedited screening process would apply to all members of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, the respective reserve components, the Army National Guard, and the Air National Guard.

Bachus said there are large numbers of soldiers carrying official orders who use commercial flights for at least a portion of their trips. The U.S. has nearly 1.4 million servicemen and servicewomen on active duty and another 1.5 million personnel in the guard and reserve.

Congressman Bachus said acceptance of the amendment is especially appropriate given the upcoming observance of Memorial Day and the long lines that holiday weekends produce at commercial airports. More than two million Americans are expected to travel by air during the coming weekend alone.

Bachus concluded, "Giving priority to our men and women in uniform is something we can do right now to express our appreciation and acknowledge their contributions and sacrifices as they protect our freedom."